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Advocacy in the Election

A Conversation with
Governor Whitmer

By Chris Azzopardi

PRESIDENT BIDEN, ON THE RECORD

His First LGBTQ+
Press Interview

THE QUEER ARAB GLOSSARY

A 'Love Letter'
to Community

STIGMA-SHATTERING UNDERWEAR

Iraqi-American Twins
Bare (Nearly) All

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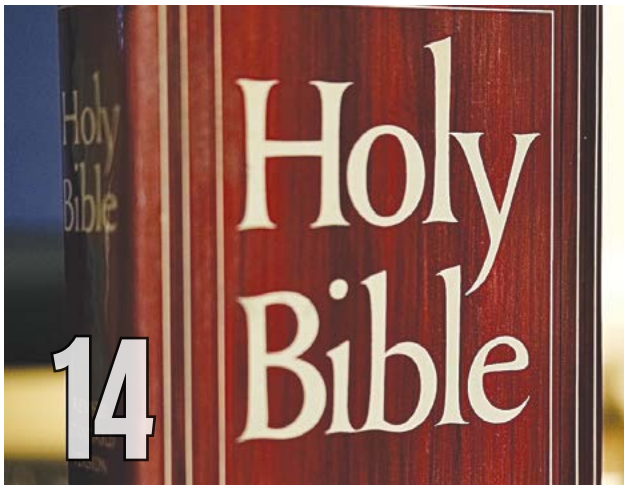
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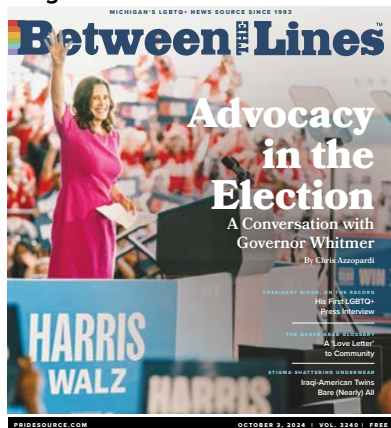
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Gov. Whitmer at a Harris-Walz rally at Detroit Metro Airport in August. Photo: Andrew Potter

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VOL. 3240 • OCTOBER 3, 2024
ISSUE 1263

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5 Queer Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY LIAM CLYMER

As the hot boys of summer don their slutty, dark academia turtlenecks for the fall, you can't help but get swept up in the moody atmosphere of autumn. Whether it be by embracing the coziness of queer gaming spaces or attending a Halloween market, BTL has you covered with all the melodrama and ambience you need to kick off the season right.



Embrace Autumn at a Halloween Market

Local artists, food trucks, drag and a full line-up of entertainment, all with a Halloween-themed twist? That's right, Holy Bones Festival and Halloween Market is perfect for your typical fall-obsessed gay. The festival will showcase the unique and electrifying beats of Detroit-based DJ Vourteque. Or, if you're looking for something a bit more low-key, laugh along to comedy collective Depot Town Comedy, a group "dedicated to showcasing diverse comedic voices."

Oh and don't you worry, honey, I didn't forget that I mentioned drag — because Holy Bones has DRAG! You can start off with more family-friendly options like drag story hour or a 13-and-up Halloween-themed drag and burlesque show. An 18-and-over show caps off the weekend's festivities.

Oct. 4, 5-9 p.m. and Oct. 5, 11 a.m.-9 p.m., The YPSI (218 N. Adams St., Ypsilanti). More details at bit.ly/4dnNGT0.



A. Nzere Kwabena. Photo: Andrew Potter

Recognize an Important Milestone with LGBT Detroit

For Executive Director A. Nzere Kwabena, LGBT Detroit's 30th birthday isn't just a number — it's symbolic of the people, the struggles and the wins of LGBTQ+ southeast Michiganders. On the night of Oct. 12 at The Wright Museum, attendees will be treated to dancing, live entertainment and remarks from local leaders, all to commemorate the history of an organization that's grown far beyond its humble basement beginnings.

As LGBT Detroit moves into a new chapter, Kwabena promises to continue to create visibility, even amid a wave of LGBTQ+ politicization. "We're committed to ride this wave and to make sure that we remain strong enough, so when the storm comes, we withstand it," he tells BTL.

Oct. 12, 6 p.m., The Charles H. Wright Museum (315 E. Warren Ave., Detroit). Save your spot at bit.ly/4diLmMV.



Affirmations. Courtesy photo

Attend a Transgender Health Fair

Everyone should have an understanding of their own body and the options available to take care of it — that's why Transgender Michigan is hosting a Transgender Health Fair on Oct. 5. The event will feature wide-ranging resources, including on-site vaccination, LGBTQ-friendly birth doulas and adolescent health care non-profits. At 2 p.m., Henry Ford Health will deliver a presentation about how to navigate gender-affirming surgeries. Director of Operations Susan Crocker tells BTL that the event's goal is to "improve the health of the transgender community and increase the community's knowledge about health options."

Oct. 5, 1-4 p.m., Affirmations (290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). Further details at transgendermichigan.org/health-fair.

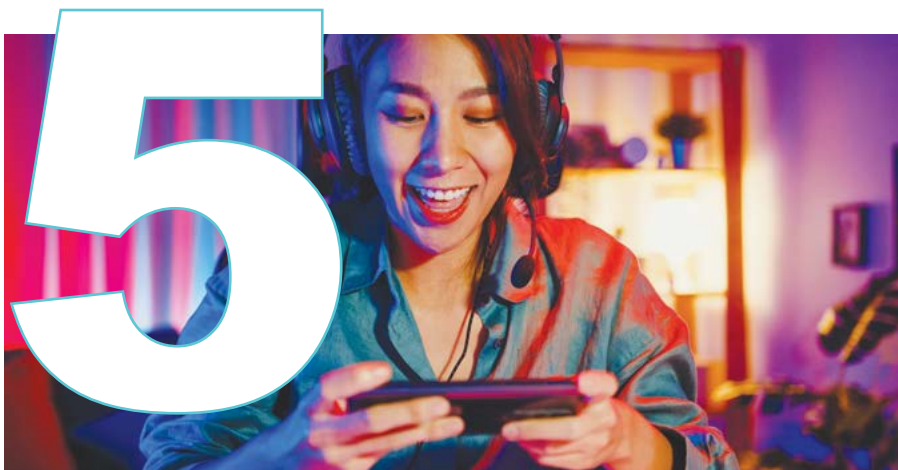


Stonewall Detroit basketball players. Photo: Instagram / @stonewalldetroit

Find Community with Stonewall Sports Detroit

While some may be quick to assume gays don't fare well when it comes to sports, a local Detroit organization has been proving that stereotype wrong for the past five years. Stonewall Sports Detroit provides opportunities for individuals of all skill levels, genders and ages to play team-based billiards, bowling, cornhole, kickball, pickleball and volleyball. Keep your eyes peeled for announcements — fall registration fills up fast. In the meantime, the group is throwing a "Gayla" to show their gratitude for the people who've made Stonewall what it is. "We're celebrating our fifth anniversary in Detroit this year — hence our Gayla — which is both a fundraiser for us and a way for us to show our appreciation for the many people who've made our organization so special," marketing director Derek Queen said. Proceeds will benefit Michigan LGBTQ+ organizations like Affirmations, Ruth Ellis Center and LGBT Detroit.

Oct. 19, 7-11 p.m., Henry Ford Health Pistons Performance Center (6201 Second Ave., Detroit). Snag a ticket at <https://bit.ly/4elHWKH>.



Settle Into Queer Gaming Spaces

As physical spaces are being torn away from LGBTQ+ individuals across the U.S., it's no surprise that folks are turning to the digital world to build community spaces. One online group, Queercraft, not only provides a safe space for LGBTQ+ individuals to come together and play Minecraft, but it also builds lasting bonds and support networks among members. Plus, their in-person meetups are frequently held in Saugatuck!

Queercraft is one of many — but new online communities for LGBTQ+ individuals are popping up by the day. So much so that media sources like Gayming Magazine are needed to offer comprehensive guides and reviews to all things queer gaming. So, as both the political and environmental climate outside get harsher going into a fall election season, cozy up with your fellow queer gamers, in spaces where you're free to be yourself.

Find out more at queercraft.net and gaymingmag.com.

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Gov. Gretchen Whitmer at a Harris-Walz rally at Detroit Metro Airport on Aug. 7. Photo: Andrew Potter

A Path Forward for Queer Americans

How Governor Whitmer knows we have an ally in the Harris-Walz campaign

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Since becoming the governor of Michigan in 2019, Gretchen Whitmer has been a fierce ally for the LGBTQ+ community — not just through her words, but through lawful action. “That woman from Michigan,” originally used as an insult from presidential candidate Donald Trump in 2020, was turned on its head by Whitmer, becoming a defining and enduring part of her stalwart identity.

Even nationally, the moniker has stuck. By owning it, Whitmer has flipped the derisive comment on its head, using it as a driving force in her rise as a prominent voice for equality as it pertains to both identity and gender. During a recent appearance on Bravo’s “Watch What Happens Live,” Gov. Whitmer took that phrase one step further when host Andy Cohen asked her what her “Real Housewife” tagline would be: “Some people call me that woman from Michigan. I call it getting shit done!”

Basically, given her national exposure, it’s no surprise Whitmer has a book out about, well, how she got shit done, even in the face of opposition, including from Trump. Its title, “True Gretch,” embodies her self-professed “joyful warrior” spirit. She is Michigan’s governor, sure, but Gov. Whitmer is also a national luminary who represents not only the kind of leader Michigan needs, but the kind of advocate the LGBTQ+ community deserves. In an era where representation matters more than ever everywhere, especially in government, her voice has clearly resonated beyond Michigan, inspiring a

new generation of leaders ready to tackle the issues that matter most.

It’s why Whitmer, a co-chair for the Harris-Walz campaign, has been making the rounds with various press interviews and public appearances, including the recent “Unite for America Rally” in Farmington Hills where Oprah interviewed presidential candidate Kamala Harris. With Nov. 5 right around the corner, Whitmer recently shared with BTL that, like many of us, she’s on edge about the outcome of this upcoming election. “I’m feeling the same way,” she says, “that’s why I’m working my tail off.”

During our wide-ranging interview, Gov. Whitmer discussed the pivotal role of the upcoming election and the urgent need for every voice to be heard, how she believes a Harris-Walz administration will support LGBTQ+ people and the critical need to safeguard the hard-won rights that many Michiganders hold dear.

Before we really get into the election, let’s start by talking about our shared anxiety and how we’re handling it. I know you like a beer, but what’s your election elixir? What magical ingredients are you putting into your glass?

I’m drinking a lot of water, to be honest. I’m trying to make sure that I’m maximizing every waking minute, and you can’t sleep on Michigan for a second. This is going to be a close race. And with three third-party candidates on [the ballot] and such high stakes, it’s just going to be really

important that we remind people that every vote counts. When Hillary Clinton lost to Trump in '16, it was two votes per precinct. So every vote makes a difference.

I want to acknowledge the work that you've done for the LGBTQ+ community in Michigan. It has been life-saving for so many. How do you believe that the Harris-Walz campaign aligns with your administration's efforts over the last few years to support the LGBTQ+ community here in Michigan?

Well, Kamala Harris has a long history of being a great ally of the LGBTQ+ community. Whether it is combating hate crimes or fighting for equity and equality, she's got the receipts. And so, I'm really proud to be supporting her and playing a role in her campaign, and I know that we are capable of doing so much more together with an ally like her in the White House.

Is there something in particular that you could point to as an example in which you felt like Harris herself really showed allegiance to the LGBTQ+ community?

Well, as a prosecutor and DA and Attorney General of San Francisco, she started her career fighting to protect this community. Whether it's marriage or fighting hate crimes or creating equal rights under the law, Kamala Harris has been on the front line her whole career. And she doesn't waffle, she doesn't change, she doesn't put her finger to the wind to figure out which way political winds are blowing. She does what she knows the right thing is to do and that means standing by and fighting for the LGBTQ+ community.

As a recent example, she denounced the "Don't Say Gay" laws in Florida.

Good point.

I can't help but consider all the LGBTQ+ protections you've supported in Michigan, and what could happen to them if, heaven forbid, Harris doesn't win. What steps can you take to ensure those protections remain secure?

Well, I'm proud of what we were able to accomplish with a new Democratic majority with regard to Elliott-Larsen and banning conversion therapy. I know that with the Dobbs decision, the Trump appointees have already signaled that they are open to disenfranchising and rolling back rights that we've gained in the last two decades, and that's why we can't afford to have four years of Donald Trump. It's already had

devastating consequences, and it could be just the beginning if he has another four-year term.

If he secures another four-year term, does that put something like the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act at risk?

Well, they can't undo what we've done in Michigan, but a Supreme Court can undermine that, yes. A federal law could absolutely supersede what we've done. And that's why whether it is LGBTQ+ rights or women's reproductive rights or simply any other right, like to marry who you love, to make sure that you can access healthcare or contraception, all of these things fall under that same right of privacy, and so they all continue to be in jeopardy. None of this is done, sadly.

A new HRC survey reports that Harris is leading Trump by nearly 67 points among LGBTQ+ voters: 74% of LGBTQ+ voters plan to vote for Harris versus nearly 8% for Trump. I am still shocked that there is a portion of our community who is voting for Trump. What would you say to LGBTQ+ voters who are either uncommitted or are considering voting for Trump?

I'd say look at these two candidates and think about not just your life today, but future generations of LGBTQ+ Americans who simply want to be recognized, protected and respected under the law. Not everyone has the same advantages that some have, and that's why it's important that we sit together. It's important that we think beyond our own individual lives and think about what disintegrating rights mean for anyone who identifies as a member of the community or an ally of the community.

Do those poll numbers surprise you?

Yes, because this is a really stark choice between someone who has denigrated people in the community, someone who has spewed hateful rhetoric to divide us, someone who has only ever made decisions that benefit himself as opposed to a leader who has been showing up for

the community her whole career, a leader who cares about the next generation and understands the lives that we live, who has worked an hourly job and taken care of a sick parent, a leader who knows how to get things done and sees us and understands us because she's lived lives like ours.


When I saw you and Gov. Tim Walz share the stage at the Harris-Walz rally in August, you seemed to have a special bond.

Yeah. I find them both to be the real deal. They're genuine people and really care about others and have dedicated their lives to serving others. They find joy in the work even on the hardest days, and I think recognize that where you and I have been given an opportunity, it comes with a responsibility to use that opportunity to help others, and I love them both to death. And I've gotten to know Tim very, very

Just being very pragmatic and blunt about the seriousness of these efforts to turn us against one another and using his platform to take it on to make space for others and to do the right thing. Whether it's because he's a former National Guardsman or he worked in our schools or he's a governor, he's always used his platform to be a great ally and to take action to protect the community and to support the community.

As states across the country have turned back the clock on LGBTQ+ issues and rights over the last several years, Michigan has become a safe haven. So has Minnesota. Do you think Tim could do the same for LGBTQ+ people in America?

I absolutely believe that a Harris-Walz administration will be looking at all things through the lens of "How do we create opportunity and how do we protect every



Look at these two candidates and think about not just your life today, but future generations of LGBTQ+ Americans who simply want to be recognized, protected and respected under the law.

well these last few years since we've been governors together. We came in together, and he's the real deal too.

When it comes to Walz, can you speak to your shared commitment to supporting LGBTQ+ individuals and what has impressed you about his work for the LGBTQ+ community in Minnesota?

I think one of the great things about Tim is he calls it the way he sees it, and I like to think that we're very similar in that regard. When you've got all these efforts to scare people and sow hate and ban books — LGBTQ+ books — he was willing to use his platform to say, "A bigger threat to our kids is gun violence, not what books are in their libraries."

American?," but especially Americans who have dealt with that uniquely hostile history and environment in this country. And so, obviously, I'm thinking about the LGBTQ+ community, as well as other communities.

And one of the things that I'm really proud of, that I also think is kind of funny as we've been competing with Minnesota as we've enacted lots of similar policies, whether it's feeding every child in our schools, or it is full civil rights protections for every person, or it is creating opportunity and leveling financial or historic barriers for people, I know Tim will take those values into the federal government and be a great partner to Kamala Harris as well.

See **Whitmer**, page 16

Activism Meets Philanthropy

Faye Schuett's enduring impact with the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan

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For decades, Faye Schuett, alongside her late wife Linda Seaver Burnett, has championed LGBTQ+ rights, blending activism with philanthropy to create lasting change. Her deep commitment to equality has long been intertwined with her relationship with the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan (CFSEM), particularly through its HOPE Fund. This fund, a pioneering initiative in Michigan advancing LGBTQ+ equality, has amplified Schuett's impact for years, ensuring resources and support reach organizations doing crucial work for the LGBTQ+ community. The partnership between Schuett and the Community Foundation stretches back many years and has created immeasurable positive change throughout southeast Michigan.

For Schuett, professor emerita of English at Schoolcraft College, activism is profoundly personal. Her journey began in Tulsa, Oklahoma with the challenges she and Burnett faced in securing their legal rights as an LGBTQ+ couple. "It wasn't easy," Schuett recalls. "We had to navigate the complexities of ensuring our relationship was protected in ways that other couples didn't have to think about." These experiences shaped their broader mission, turning personal hardship into a cause that would benefit the entire LGBTQ+ community. First in Oklahoma, and later in Michigan, they educated themselves and others, sharing resources with fellow LGBTQ+ couples striving for equality and legal protection.

"We started by gathering friends together," Schuett says, "and educating ourselves on how to secure legal rights. It was about making sure we were protected, but also about sharing that knowledge with others."

This personal mission soon transformed into a lifetime of activism. Schuett and Burnett

became involved in grassroots movements throughout Michigan, eventually playing a role in the Peninsula Group, a coalition that worked to unite LGBTQ+ organizations across the state. This movement was about much more than individual couples securing their legal rights. It was about creating a stronger, more connected community that could advocate for widespread, systemic change.

Schuett reflects, "It was always about the bigger picture. We knew that by coming together as a community, we could make a difference that would benefit everyone."

As their activism grew, so too did their involvement in philanthropy. Though Schuett and Burnett did not consider themselves wealthy, they understood the power of financial support. "We weren't rich," Schuett explains, "but we could still make a difference with what we had. Small, consistent donations can really add up over time." The couple began contributing to various LGBTQ+ organizations, including Affirmations, the ACLU's LGBT Project, Ruth Ellis Center, LGBT Detroit, as well as the HOPE Fund at CFSEM. They believed that their activism and philanthropy went hand in hand, each effort reinforcing the other.

The HOPE Fund, in particular, became a central part of their philanthropic vision. Created by the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan in 1994, the HOPE Fund was designed to support LGBTQ+ organizations and initiatives in the region for generations. Over the years, this endowed fund has provided millions of dollars in grants to groups working



Faye Schuett. Photo: Ashley Collins

on behalf of the LGBTQ+ community, from direct services to advocacy and education and continues to grow through investments and donations.

Schuett's partnership with the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan has been essential in helping her channel her resources and activism into meaningful, sustainable impact. The Foundation's emphasis on long-term sustainability and collaboration resonated deeply with Schuett. "The Foundation's approach aligns perfectly with what I've always believed," she says. "It's about ensuring that the organizations we support are not just surviving, but thriving."

Through the HOPE Fund, Schuett and its other donors have championed several key projects that have helped build capacity for LGBTQ+ organizations in Southeast Michigan. The Fund's focus on sustainability has allowed these groups to grow, work with each other and ally organizations and become more effective advocates for change. Schuett is particularly proud of the Fund's ability to foster collaboration between different organizations, encouraging them to share resources and knowledge rather than competing for limited funds.

For Schuett, the ability to create lasting impact with the Community

Foundation has been one of the most rewarding aspects of her philanthropic journey. "I've always believed that change doesn't happen overnight," she says. "You have to be in it for the long haul. That's what I love about the Community Foundation — they're focused on creating long-term solutions, not just quick fixes."

One of the things Schuett appreciates most about the Community Foundation is how it makes philanthropy accessible to all

donors, regardless of their financial situations. Through programs like monthly giving, individuals are able to contribute consistently to the causes they care about without feeling overwhelmed by the financial commitment. "The Community Foundation makes it easy for everyone to contribute, no matter how much you have to give," she notes. "It's not about how much you can donate; it's about being part of something bigger than yourself."

As Schuett looks to the future, she hopes the next generation of LGBTQ+ philanthropists and activists continue building on the progress that has been made. "There's still so much work to be done," she says. "We've made a lot of progress, but we can't afford to become complacent." Schuett is hopeful that younger generations will take up the mantle of both activism and philanthropy, understanding that both are necessary to achieve lasting change.

She encourages young people to see philanthropy not just as an obligation, but as a powerful tool for creating the world they want to see. "Activism is crucial, but philanthropy allows us to build the infrastructure that makes that activism sustainable," Schuett explains. "Without financial

support, the organizations doing this important work can't survive."

Schuett still works toward her vision of an inclusive, sustainable and thriving region for all. She hopes that future generations will continue prioritizing collaboration and long-term impact, just as the Community Foundation has done. "I want to see a future where LGBTQ+ organizations are not only surviving but flourishing, where they have the resources and support they need to make a real difference," she says.

In the end, Schuett's legacy is one of partnership — partnership with the Community Foundation, with the organizations she has supported, and with the broader LGBTQ+ community. Her hope is that her work will inspire others to get involved, to contribute in whatever ways they can and to continue the fight for equality and justice.

As Schuett puts it, "We all have a role to play in making the world a better place. It doesn't matter how much money you have or how much time you can give. What matters is that you show up, that you contribute and that you're committed to the cause."

Schuett's story is a reminder that anyone can make a difference, no matter where they come from or what resources they have. Schuett calls on emerging LGBTQ+ philanthropists to connect with the Community Foundation for Southeast Michigan and the HOPE Fund, urging them to become part of a movement that creates permanent, positive change for LGBTQ+ individuals in the region. Through collaboration, consistent giving and a commitment to equity, Schuett's vision for a stronger, more inclusive community can become a reality for generations to come.

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Mark Robinson Is Emblematic of the Hypocrisy of the Entire Republican Party



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

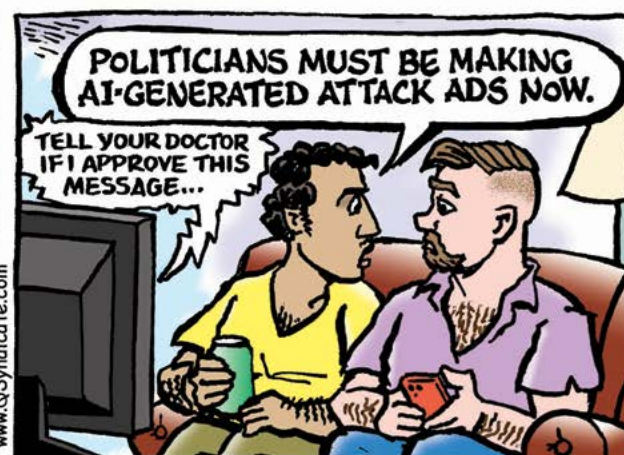
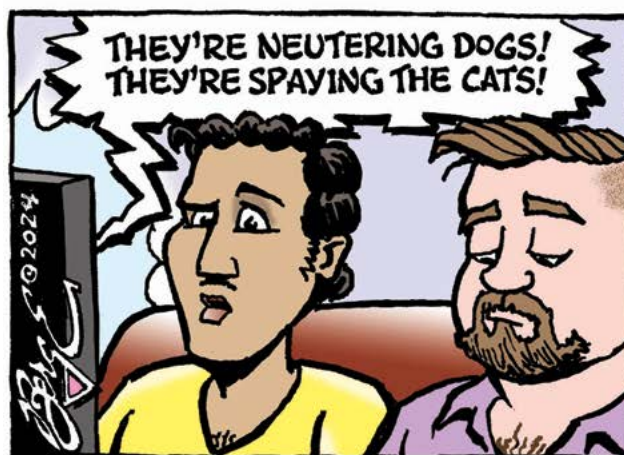
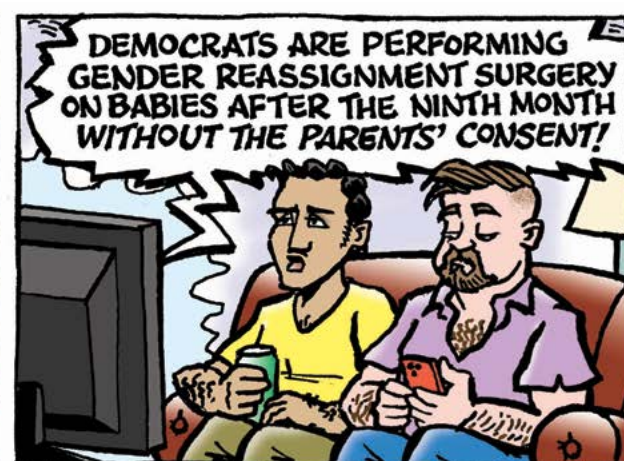
For the past few years, I've heard people say Republicans have a "candidate quality" problem. In other words, that Republicans are losing races or are having to fight much harder than they have in the past to protect safe Republican seats because they just happen to be choosing bad candidates. And by bad, I mean extremist candidates who are loud and proud about being extreme.

But the problem for Republicans isn't that they're picking bad candidates. It's that the candidates rising to the top are much more open about the backwards policies and hateful intent of the party's platform. This is due, in part, to Trump, who has normalized being on the lunatic fringe. But it's also due to gerrymandering. For example, when a district with a safe Republican seat has a primary election, it's the base that typically comes out to vote. And the Republican base is not tethered to this earthly plane. They are far out there when it comes to what most people in this country support.

Republicans are out there running on a platform to

Robinson, who said that transgender people should just 'find a corner somewhere' rather than be allowed to use women's restrooms, also talked about liking to watch porn featuring transgender people.

ban abortion nationwide, ban birth control, get rid of the Affordable Care Act without any plan to replace it, ban public schools (or at least divert funding from public schools to private Christian schools), overturn the Supreme Court's marriage equality ruling, do away with any laws that protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination, gut Medicaid and Medicare, gut Social Security, make guns easier to get and harder to regulate in any way, ban porn, cut taxes for the richest people in the country and raise taxes on everyone else. And those are just the greatest hits. Plenty of proposed Republican cuts are just as bad if not worse.



And here's the thing — this is not some kind of new Republican Party that all of a sudden is extreme on just about every issue Americans care about. This is who the Republican Party has been my entire lifetime. A major turning point for the GOP was President Ronald Regan's embrace of the Christian right back in the '80s. The party has been moving further and further right ever since.

So, yeah, it's a feature, not a bug, that causes the Republican campaign machine to spit out candidates who are disconnected from the majority of the country. They were just able to hide their extremism better in the past.

Which leads me to North Carolina gubernatorial candidate Mark Robinson, a

self-described "perv."

Robinson, who is currently the state's lieutenant governor, is running as a man of God. A Christian man not afraid to use his religion to justify his extreme policy positions.

Robinson, among other horrible ideas and beliefs, says the Holocaust never happened, wants to ban abortion, called the Parkland school shooting survivors "media prosti-tots," and really, really hates LGBTQ+ people.

In 2021, he said during remarks to a North Carolina church, "There's no reason anybody anywhere in America should be telling any child about transgenderism, homosexuality, any of

that filth."

Let's just say that his views have not changed since then.

Robinson is all over the news now not because his campaign for governor is going so well, but because it is imploding under the weight of scandal.

Apparently Mr. High and Mighty had quite the appetite for porn and for cheating on his wife prior to becoming an elected official. It's been reported that he frequented porn shops, cheated on his wife with her sister, was a frequent poster to a message board on a site called "Nude Africa" on which he referred to himself as a "Black Nazi" who wanted to own slaves and wistfully recalled when he was 14 and used to peep on girls showering at the gym. Among a long list of other filth.

Robinson, who said that transgender people should just "find a corner somewhere" rather than be allowed to use women's restrooms, also talked about liking to watch porn featuring transgender people.

"I like watching [slur for transgender person] on girl porn! That's fucking hot! It takes the man out while leaving the man in! And yeah I'm a 'perv' too!"

So if a transgender person wants to be treated with basic respect and decency they are "filth," but if they are used for his own sexual gratification they are "hot." Got it. Cool guy. Definitely governor material.

Oh, and Robinson has denied all of the accusations saying that AI was to blame.

This is a man who Trump called "Martin Luther King Jr. on steroids," by the way. Robinson once called King a "fucking commie bastard."

There is open speculation about whether Robinson's sinking ship will harm Trump's chances in North Carolina. And to that I say, "Here's hoping!"

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Remembering U-M Alum and Tony Award Winner Gavin Creel

The Broadway community and local loved ones are mourning the loss of Tony Award-winning actor, musician and University of Michigan alumnus Gavin Creel. Creel, who won a Tony for his portrayal of Cornelius Hackl in “Hello, Dolly!,” died Sept. 30 in Manhattan after a brief battle with a rare and aggressive form of cancer. He was 48. Creel’s partner, Alex Temple Ward, confirmed the news through the

actor’s publicist. Parade reports that Creel was diagnosed with metastatic melanotic peripheral nerve sheath sarcoma in July. Creel acted in several Broadway hits, including “Hair,” “La Cage aux Folles,” “The Book of Mormon,” “Waitress” and a role in “Thoroughly Modern Millie” that landed him a Tony award nomination. In a 2011 BTL interview ahead of a concert at Kerrytown Concert House, Creel said, “There are more important things than show business and being famous and making tons of money and even being a great artist — like love, friendship and fighting disease.”



Gavin Creel. Photo: gavincreel.com

Sarah McBride Set to Become First Openly Trans U.S. Congressperson

Delaware Sen. Sarah McBride is poised to make history this fall after a recent primary win. McBride, who won her primary by a whopping 63% margin, is expected to become the first openly transgender person elected to Congress when the November ballots are counted. The LGBTQ+ Victory Fund said in a press release that McBride is heavily favored to win. “Voters across the country are sick and tired of the divisive politics of the past — that’s why we’re seeing an increase in diverse, young candidates like Sarah McBride clearing their primaries,” wrote Victory Fund President Annise Parker. “Nobody is more qualified than Sarah to represent the values of Delaware in Congress. I look forward to celebrating Sarah’s election victory in November and seeing her get to work for her constituents in Washington.”



“Miss Ann Arbor” contestants at the Rubaiyat, 1982. Photo: AADL/Courtesy of Peter Yates

October Is LGBTQ+ History Month

While it’s always queer history month around here, October is the designated month to officially recognize the rich history of LGBTQ+ culture around the world. It’s an opportunity to reflect on the gains that have been made, especially in places like Michigan, while acknowledging that queer equality is still far in the future for many LGBTQ+ folks, who are making

history as we speak by standing up against anti-queer violence and suppression. Visit lgbthistorymonth.org to read about community members who have made an impact, and don’t miss local resources like Ann Arbor District Library’s LGBTQ+ Walking Tour, which highlights local queer trailblazers (aadl.org/lgbtqwalkingtour) or BTL’s LGBTQ+ civil rights history timeline (pridesource.com/article/lgbtq-history-timeline), which documents the 50 years of progress it took to enshrine LGBTQ+ rights into Michigan law.

Vote Early!

Early voting is underway in Michigan. Not every community offers this convenience, so check Michigan.gov/Vote to find out your options for early in-person and absentee voting. Don’t forget to check voter411.org to study before the big test, too. Here, you can find out exactly what to expect on your ballot so you can make informed decisions — no pressure, but our rights are on the line here, babes. OK, maybe some pressure...

Stop by the HoliGAY Market

Affirmations will host Queers for Fears, a “HoliGAY” market, on Oct. 12 from 12-6 p.m. Shop local queer and ally artists and vendors and bring the whole family — the LGBTQ+ community center will offer treats to any trick-or-treaters who stop by. It’s the perfect chance to test drive that Halloween costume ahead of the big holiday. Visit facebook.com/@goaffirmations to learn more.

Get Into Spooky Season with ‘Dragula’

“The Boulet Brothers’ Dragula” season 6 is streaming on Shudder and AMC+, kicking off spooky season with a new group of 12 drag artists competing for the \$100,000 prize and the title of the World’s Next Drag Supermonster. Judges include stars like Jennifer Tilly, Mike Flanagan and Tatiana Maslany, making this “Season 666” the most horrifying yet!



Yuri, a contestant on “Dragula.” Photo: Shudder/AMC+

How ‘The Queer Arab Glossary’ Challenges Stereotypes About Arab Homophobia

Before a Michigan tour stop, author Marwan Kaabour calls the book a ‘love letter’ to the queer Arab community

BY JORDYN BRADLEY

With Lebanon experiencing its deadliest day in nearly 20 years last month — not to mention the ongoing conflict in Gaza that has left more than 40,000 Palestinians dead — Marwan Kaabour says he has struggled with how to navigate the release of his debut book, “The Queer Arab Glossary,” especially when these issues hit close to home.

“We find ourselves living in an incredibly dangerous and precarious world. It just felt worthless,” says Kaabour, who is from Beirut and lives in London.

But the book, which Kaabour says highlights the historical and linguistic roots of the slang that different Arab dialects speak and relate to, “aims to be a record of information or knowledge that might die out,” he says.

“I’m trying to have a record of a history of a people who might otherwise not have their existence acknowledged by the world, and to try and have ownership over this knowledge. We are clearly seeing a very concentrated effort to try and wipe out the histories and the cultures that are under attack. So it shows the importance of not allowing aggressors to have control over the narrative.”

The narrative that Kaabour wants people to know about in “The Queer Arab Glossary” is that its purpose is to make people feel a sense of belonging, and that anyone can find something in it that resonates, regardless of their identity, sexuality or religious beliefs.

“It is, first and foremost, though, a love letter to my community,” he says.

“My understanding of my identity as an Arab person is formed in a specific way. And I have come to understand the difference between our identities as someone who grew up in the region versus someone who grew



Marwan Kaabour. Courtesy photo

up in the diaspora.”

They often feel split between two spaces, Kaabour says, which is why he hopes through the glossary and his global tour following its release, his in-person discussions “further embolden those bridges of solidarity that we must need to have between us — not just queers, but also just the Arabs in general.”

Which is why when he was planning this tour, Kaabour says the one place he pushed to visit wasn’t Berlin, Paris or even New York City — though he was excited for those, too.

“Out of all of the stops for the tour, Michigan was the one I was

persistent on making happen. It was important for me to come to the heartland of the Arab community in the United States,” he says.

Michigan is the state with the highest percentage of Arab Americans in the U.S. (2.1%), with about 190,000 Arabic speakers living in Metro Detroit — or about 13% of all Arabic speakers in the U.S.

Kaabour will hold a book discussion at the University of Michigan on Oct. 11. He says he is “shocked” by the reception the book has received and the turnout at these events so far has been “mind-blowing.” “It just shows

there’s such a thirst for the conversation,” he says.

Kaabour grew up the son of a musician and actor father and a painter mother. Creativity was always sprinkled into his endeavors, from being a child actor back home in Lebanon to garnering himself a successful career in graphic design. He has designed over 20 books, including the “Rihanna” book by Phaidon Press.

In 2019, Kaabour shifted gears and founded Takweer, an online archive of

that you relate to. You don’t understand why you relate to that, but there’s something unsaid that happens. And then as you get older, and as you come to define your sexuality or your gender identity, you start to make connections in your head, but you almost have to do all of that labor from scratch on your own,” he says. He hopes that thanks to Takweer and “The Queer Arab Glossary,” “every queer Arab kid won’t have to start from zero,” much like he had to.

Kaabour says his work also aims to strike down the stereotype that Arab people are homophobic and unwilling to embrace queerness in their communities.

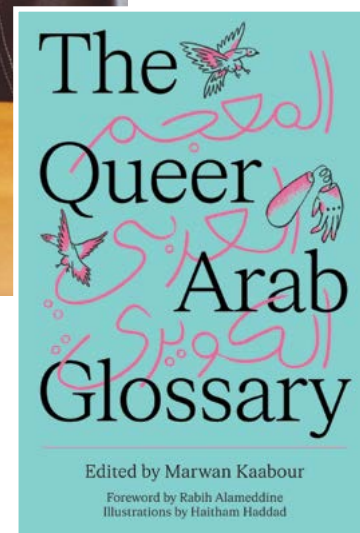
“We need to stop making these big, broad strokes of judgments, and just have a more nuanced understanding of each other and the way we think,” he says. “I call bullshit on that, and I have the book to prove it.”

Kaabour enlisted the help of actors, poets, activists, musicians and more to contribute to the glossary to not only show the historical and linguistic roots of their dialect, but also to help readers understand the value of language, slang, dialect and queerness in today’s world.

“I think anyone can take that knowledge and learn more about their own contexts as a result,” says Kaabour, who also says the glossary might help people who weren’t born in an Arab region feel connected to their roots.

Queer people, Arab people and queer Arab people alike have been pigeonholed into rigid boxes, he says, and he hopes these conversations alter that perception.

“I thought the whole point of queer discourse was to destroy the binary,” says Kaabour, “so I’m planning on just getting rid of the box altogether.”



queer narratives in Arab history and popular culture. Growing up before the internet age, Kaabour had little access to information about queer Arab people, as the discourse that was present for him was dominated by Eurocentric notions of what queerness is.

“You see this diva, this music video, this character in the movie

President Joe Biden's First Interview with an LGBTQ+ Newspaper

From the Oval Office, a queer media first



President Joe Biden. Courtesy photo

BY CHRISTOPHER KANE

Washington Blade, Courtesy of the National LGBT Media Association

Writing about President Joe Biden's legacy is difficult without the distance and time required to assess a leader of his stature, but what becomes clear from talking with him is the extent to which his views on LGBTQ+ rights come from the heart.

Biden leads an administration that has been hailed as the most pro-LGBTQ+ in American history, achieving major milestones in the struggle to expand freedoms and protections for the community.

Meanwhile, conservative elected officials at the local, state and national

levels have led an all-out assault against LGBTQ+ Americans — especially those who are transgender, and especially transgender youth, who face an uncertain future with Donald Trump promising to strip them of their rights and reverse the gains of the past four years if he is elected in November.

Biden shared his thoughts and reflections on these subjects and more in a wide-ranging sit-down interview with the *Washington Blade* on Sept. 12 in the Oval Office, which marked the first time in which an LGBTQ+ newspaper has conducted an exclusive interview with a sitting U.S. president.

Looking back on the movement,

the president repeatedly expressed his admiration for the “men and women who broke the back of the prejudice, or began to break the back” starting with those involved in the nascent movement for gay rights that was kicked off in earnest with the 1969 Stonewall Riots.

They “took their lives in their own hands,” Biden said. “Not a joke. It took enormous courage, enormous courage, and that’s why I’ve spent some time also trying to memorialize that,” first as vice president in 2016 when President Barack Obama designated a new national monument at the site of the historic uprising, and again this summer when speaking at the opening ceremony of the

Stonewall National Monument Visitor Center.

“I think it set an example,” Biden said, not just in the U.S. but around the world.

Stonewall “became the site of a call for freedom and for dignity and for equality,” he said, and at a time when, “imagine — if you spoke up, you’d be fired, or you get the hell beat out of you.”

The president continued, “I was really impressed when I went to Stonewall. And I was really impressed talking to the guys who stood up at the time. I think the thing that gets underestimated is the physical and moral courage of the community, the people who broke through, who said

‘enough, enough,’ and they risked their lives. Some lost their lives along the way.”

Through to today, Biden said, “most of the openly gay people that have worked with me, that I’ve worked with, the one advantage they have is they tend to have more courage than most people have.”

“No, I’m serious,” he added, “I think you guys underestimate that.”

The president has spoken publicly about his deep respect and admiration for LGBTQ+ people, including the trans community, and trans youth, whom he has repeatedly said are some of the bravest people he knows.

A record-breaking number of LGBTQ+ officials are serving in appointed positions throughout the Biden-Harris administration. Among them are Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg, the first openly gay Senate-confirmed Cabinet member; Rachel Levine, the highest-ranking transgender appointee in history, who serves as assistant secretary for health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the first out White House communications director and press secretary, Ben LaBolt and Karine Jean-Pierre; and 11 federal judges (the same number of LGBTQ+ judicial nominees who were confirmed during the Obama-Biden administration’s two terms).

Even though “everyone was nervous,” Biden said, “I wanted an administration that looked like America,” adding, “all the LGBTQ+ people that have worked for me or with me have reinforced my view that it’s not what your sexual preference is, it’s what your intellectual capacity is and what your courage is.”

“I never sat down and said, ‘It’s going to be hard, man, she’s gay, or he’s gay,’ or ‘she’s a lesbian,’” he said, and likewise, “It wasn’t like the people I work with, I went, ‘God, I’m surprised they’re as competent as anybody else.’”

And then there is Sarah McBride, the Delaware state senator who is

See **President Biden**, page 21

‘But the Bible Says!’

How one mistake accidentally sparked today’s anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric

BY LAUREN ROWELLO

After months of deliberation, David Sheldon Fearon wrote a letter in 1959 to the committee responsible for developing the Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible. Fearon, who died in 2023, was then a 21-year-old seminary student in Canada who hoped to call attention to a mistranslation he’d discovered.

The passage in question: 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, a list of vices which outlines who will not “inherit the kingdom of God.” The list emphasizes and clarifies the comment that precedes it, which underlines that the “unrighteous” will not be rewarded with this privilege.

The recipients of Fearon’s letter — 22 men who were appointed by 44 Protestant denominations to develop the RSV — had added the word “homosexual” to that list, a move Fearon called a “serious weakness in translation.” He even attached an appendix to his letter to prove his interpretation was scholarly and sound.

Although academic rigor is reason enough for a change, Fearon was also concerned for LGBTQ+ people like himself who had been “wronged and slandered by the incorrect usage of this word.”

Documentarians of the film “1946: The Mistranslation that Shifted a Culture” highlight an emerging connotation at the time of the translation, naming “homosexual” as synonymous with a “pedophile” or a “molester.” Fearon underlined in his letter that misconflating the two concepts already had serious consequences.

“Since this is a holy book of Scripture sacred to the Christian, I am more deeply concerned because well-meaning and sincere, but misinformed and misguided people (those among the clergy not excluded) may use this Revised Standard Version translation of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 as a sacred

weapon, not in fact for the purification of the church, but in fact for injustice against a defenseless minority group...” he wrote.

The RSV committee had convened in 1929 to create a Bible that would reintegrate some of the “beauty and power” lost by the overly literal translation in another option for English speakers — the American Standard Version of 1901. The group aimed to bridge the need for a more modern and accurate translation with the need to reflect the true meaning of the original texts, de-emphasizing word-for-word translations.

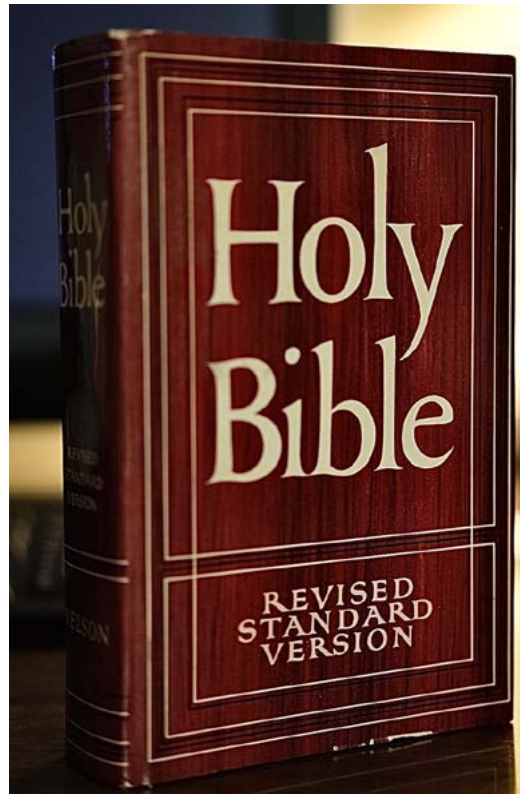
In their process, translators shorthanded two Greek words — *malakoi* and *arsenokoitai*, which can have multiple meanings but have sometimes been translated as “effeminate” and “men who share a bed” respectively.

“Or know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with men, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God,” reads the American Standard Version of 1901, which the RSV committee was hoping to update.

After visiting the original Greek, the RSV committee combined the Greek terms into a simplified, more modern word they’d hoped would convey the same meaning: “homosexual.”

But many scholars — including Fearon — feel this was an error of oversimplification, as the original Greek likely required a more nuanced reading.

Rather than broadly referring to the queer community or even



specifically to gay men, some of the earliest translations point to *malakoi* as meaning “weak” — more likely referring to moral weakness and a lack of self-control in this context. Coupled with the word *arsenokoitai* — which today’s scholars liken to using power as means to exploit others in broader ways, a better shorthand might be “sexual abusers.”

Christian researchers Kathy Baldock and Ed Oxford recently discovered the correspondence between Fearon and Luther Allan Weigle, head of the RSV committee, and were surprised to learn that the mid-century team of translators had been receptive to Fearon’s feedback about the mistranslation.

Weigle assured Fearon the information he provided would be considered when the team met again to continue revisions — but this would not occur for almost 10 years.

In 1968, the RSV committee reconvened — and those scholars

decided to strike their phrase about “homosexuals,” replacing it with “sexual perverts” in 1 Corinthians. It’s a broader description that more accurately conveys the injustices warned about in the original Greek — even if by today’s standards, the phrase needs additional refining if the hope is to condemn abusers and exploiters.

Despite the win, the change came too late. Two decades of damage had already been done, cementing the mistake’s legacy.

The New American Standard Version, for instance — a revision of the text that the RSV was based on, which never included the term “homosexual” — added the word for this updated version in 1971.

Because the correction didn’t come sooner, the 1946 version of the RSV became the first standard text circulated throughout the evangelical boom of the 1950s through ’80s that birthed today’s extremist, conservative Christian movement. And dozens of future translations and interpretations were based on it — many of them further skewing from original Greek, Hebrew or Aramaic words and context.

Although the RSV translators only included the word “homosexual” in just one passage, the mistranslation informed future translators — who added the word at least five more times to other versions of the Bible as an alternative to broader language that had been used in the past.

Some anti-LGBTQ+ Christians now promote dozens of additional passages through a queerphobic lens. This has resulted in countless experiences of religious trauma, creating both internal and external conflicts for people brought up in queerphobic faith traditions.

Although religiosity is often associated with lower risks for depression and suicidality for other groups, lesbian, gay, bisexual and questioning adults who view religion as important aspects of their lives are still at increased risk for suicide — with those who are questioning placed at the highest risk.

One study showed that the religious views of parents doubled suicide risk for LGBTQ+ young adults. Conversion therapy — which is largely pursued by parents and offered by religious leaders — can also double an LGB person’s risk for suicide attempt.

According to The Trevor Project, Pennsylvania is the state with the largest number of identified conversion therapy practitioners by a strong margin. A 2022 report by the Trevor Project notes that 16% of LGBTQ+ youth in Pennsylvania have been threatened with conversion therapy or have experienced conversion therapy — a practice that is still legal in the state, though five state boards recently adopted new policies to oppose it.

A growing movement to not only welcome but affirm and protect LGBTQ+ people is emerging in some Christian spaces — and as more people learn about how the Bible gets translated, the interest in reclaiming mistranslated texts for the purpose of calling out abusers (rather than LGBTQ+ people) is beginning too.

This brings hope for the next generation. Meanwhile, conservatives continue to lean on mistranslations to condemn the queer community and harm LGBTQ+ people — as the “sacred weapon” Fearon predicted they might.

This article is part of the 2024 LGBTQ+ History Month Project, with stories curated by Philadelphia Gay News editor Jeremy Rodriguez.

LGBTQ Rights and Respect Have Been Strengthened by the Michigan Supreme Court

As the guardian of justice, fairness, and freedoms in our state, the Michigan Supreme Court plays an essential role in ensuring equality for all. This year, Michigan voters get to choose who fills two spots on the Michigan Supreme Court, and we all have a civic duty to vote for the two candidates we think will make the best decisions on behalf of all citizens.

The LGBTQ community has been granted important civil rights by the Michigan Supreme Court. It's no secret that members of this community still face discrimination, but recent decisions by Michigan's highest court have helped secure important protections against bias and unfair treatment for LGBTQ folks.

The Michigan Supreme Court ruled in 2022 that the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act, a law enacted in 1976, bans firing, evicting, or discriminating against someone in any way because they are a member of the LGBTQ community. Advocates worked for many years to get this case before the Michigan Supreme Court, which ruled that the law's ban on discrimination based on the basis of sex includes sexual orientation.

In 2023, the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that judges must use the preferred pronouns of defendants, litigants, attorneys, and others in the courtroom. The Michigan Supreme Court was the first in the nation to require this change through court rules, which respects the dignity of all people. In fact, although the ruling especially impacts transgender and nonbinary folks, it also respects those who choose not to recognize people's preferred pronouns, allowing them to refer to "the defendant" or "the plaintiff." This is the kind of fairness and equity all Michiganders deserve.

Although these rulings were specific to the LGBTQ community, the Michigan Supreme Court makes decisions on critical issues that impact everyone. This includes civil rights for all, as well as environmental regulations, criminal justice, economic regulations, and more. In fact, the Michigan Supreme Court is the ultimate decider on the most complex and consequential cases in our state.

The two candidates who win their elections this year will have a major voice in how Michigan's future unfolds, along with the rest of the seven-person court. Each justice is elected for eight-year terms, which means your vote will help shape the future of our state for years to come.

Michigan is one of only 24 states that empowers the people to vote for their state Supreme Court. It's a big responsibility, so it's important to do your homework about the candidates so you know which two best reflect your values and the kind of Michigan you want to live in.

But you have to do more than your homework. You must manually select your two choices for the open seats on the Michigan Supreme Court. Feel free to vote a straight-party ticket – but don't stop there. Look for the non-partisan section of your ballot. That's where you'll find the candidates for the Michigan Supreme Court. They're nominated by a political party, but their affiliation is not listed on the ballot.

Don't miss your chance to play a role in making sure the Michigan Supreme Court is made up of qualified justices who will put the best interests of everyday Michiganders first – no matter their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, or any other aspect of their lives. Choose candidates with integrity and a strong track record of fairness and justice for all.

Get more information about the Michigan Supreme Court, the voting process, and how to tell others about the importance of voting for the people who will sit on our state's highest court. Visit www.MISupremeCourtRocks.com to find everything you need to make an educated decision on your ballot in November.

-Erin Knott, Equality Michigan Executive Director



There have been two recent acts of hate speech by state officials on LGBTQ+ officials in Michigan. One occurred on Aug. 22, after the Democratic National Convention, when former co-chair of the Michigan GOP Meshawn Maddock took to X and captioned a photo of Michigan DNC attendees, including

from the bench could say things that are so offensive and denigrate Michiganders. To see it coming from someone who has a high office in the GOP is equally horrific, which is why anyone who is a member of the LGBTQ+ community who doesn't identify as a Democrat, I invite you to join us. You got a seat at our table.

Morgan acknowledged his concern for LGBTQ+ youth who feel the impact of queerphobia from these comments. What message would you share with LGBTQ+ youth in the

how do you think LGBTQ+ allies and advocates can further support the Harris-Walz campaign right now?

Sign up to work on the campaign, make phone calls, get people registered to vote, help us make sure that everyone who is registered that is going to support the LGBTQ+ community gets out and actually gets their vote in. There are lots of ways to participate through the Michigan ONE Campaign and encourage people to sign up and to, as Michelle Obama said at the DNC, "Do something." Every single day, do something. We don't want to

work very closely with [openly gay Sen.] Jeremy Moss and [openly gay State Rep.] Jason Hoskins and the legislative leaders on making sure that where there is additional work to do, that we are doing it, that we are getting the bills to my desk, and that we are a state that the LGBTQ+ community can point to across the country as a state that's doing more, that's doing it right, and that is drawing people into our state because of our work here.

To end on a more lighthearted note, when I got my copy of your book, it came from the publisher in a sparkly fuchsia mailer. Am I right to think that was by request of the Governor?

Yeah. Of course. [Laughs.]

The Harris-Walz campaign seems to be closely following your lead in engaging young voters. I received an email from them shortly after Trump posted his "I Hate Taylor Swift" message, which cleverly mentioned several of her songs. It reminded me of your campaign's creative strategies. Are they drawing inspiration from your approach? Are you advising them in any way?

I know that Julia Pickett and my team have gotten awards for the work that we've done on social media. I know that people pay attention across the country as to what we're doing, and I think we've got one of the best teams there is, to be honest. I think we combine what's going on

in real time with important things, like the budget. And when you have Barbie talking about fixing the damn roads, it's a sweet spot where you're telling people about the work you're doing, but you're doing it in a fun way. And I love seeing the Harris-Walz campaign doing that too. The coconut tree stuff a couple of weeks ago and brat summer, it's just been fun. And I think it's that spirit that attracts so many people and why we're feeling optimistic, but we're also very clear there's a lot of hard work to do between now and election day.

That's right. Well, let's go have a brat fall, and let's go win this thing.

Let's do it.



Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. Photo: Andrew Potter

Oakland County Executive Dave Coulter and Rep. Jason Morgan, by writing "Fags and Hags." Then, in late August, Oakland County Probate Court Judge Kathleen Ryan attacked Coulter with hateful anti-gay slurs and names in a recording that surfaced. What is your reaction to these recent derogatory comments directed toward members of the LGBTQ+ community?

It's disgusting and it's unacceptable, and it is horrific to think that someone in a position of power who delivers justice

community who might be affected by this kind of hate speech?

Well, number one, you are loved, you are seen, and you're respected. And number two, make your voices heard in this election. This is going to have huge consequences, and young people in our society are going to live with the consequences of this election longer than anyone else, and that's why we've got to pull people into this moment. And so, it's not just you yourself voting, but it's getting your friends, your relatives, your co-workers, your fellow students out to vote as well.

As the Nov. 5 election day nears,

wake up the day after this next election and wish we had done more and watch our rights and our loved ones pay a price because we could have done more and we didn't.

As you look ahead to the rest of your term as governor, what is your long-term vision for LGBTQ+ rights in our state?

I love being governor, and I am going to work my tail off every day until my last minute as governor so that I can assure that we have achieved everything we can and that whomever comes next doesn't undermine the strides that we've made. I'll continue to

From Billie Eilish to Rosie O'Donnell, Why Queer Celebs Are Coming Out Strong for Kamala Harris

Social media endorsements are pouring in as election draws near

BY LIAM CLYMER

With the Nov. 5 election day nearing, many LGBTQ+ figures are, well, coming out — but this time to offer endorsements for Vice President Kamala Harris.

Harris has long been a champion of the LGBTQ+ community. As California District Attorney in 2004, she was one of the first politicians to marry same-sex couples.

Whether fighting to overturn anti-trans policies across the country alongside Joe Biden, or in her own campaign where reproductive rights and freedom over one's body have taken center stage, Harris has drawn a stark comparison in her policy stances compared to that of former president Donald Trump, who has previously promised to roll back protections and rescind existing policies protecting LGBTQ+ individuals from being subject to discrimination.

Driven by the support she's shown over the years, leading LGBTQ+ personalities are now raising their voices in favor of Harris.

Chappell Roan

It was more of a resigned shrug than a ringing endorsement, but the queer Midwest Princess herself recently expressed her intention to vote for Harris, while emphatically not giving her a wholehearted endorsement. "Yeah, I'm voting for fucking Kamala," she said in a TikTok video, before adding a few caveats. "There's no way I can stand behind some of the left's completely transphobic and completely genocidal views," she said. "Fuck Trump, for fucking real, but fuck some of the shit that has gone down in the Democratic Party that has failed people like me and you."



Billie Eilish and Lance Bass. Photos: Instagram

Ultimately, there's no doubt the Harris camp is happy to take the non-endorsement nod from Roan's incredibly far-reaching platform.

Billie Eilish

Out member of the LGBTQ+ community, singer and songwriter Billie Eilish posted to Instagram to offer her endorsement for Harris. In a short video with her record producer brother Finneas, the two encouraged their audience to register to vote — saying that, "the choice is clear."

"We are voting for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz because they are fighting to protect our reproductive freedom, our planet and our democracy," Eilish said. "Vote like your life depends on it, because it does."

Lil Nas X

Queer rapper and artist Lil Nas X tweeted in support of Harris the same day Biden dropped out.



"Ur seat is ready madam president," he posted. "lock in lil bro! @KamalaHarris."

Megan Thee Stallion

Rapper, singer and bisexual icon Megan Thee Stallion joined Harris on stage during an Atlanta rally on July 30. Decked out in a royal blue cropped suit, with matching backup dancers, Megan Thee Stallion made her intentions clear before launching into her hits.

"I want to start off by saying: Hotties for Harris," she said.

As her performance went on, Megan Thee Stallion continued to engage with the audience.

"We about to make history with the first female president, the first Black female president," she declared.

Rosie O'Donnell

Out lesbian and comedian Rosie O'Donnell was seen showing her support for Harris on social media before Biden even dropped out.

The day that he officially stepped down, she posted to Instagram, "thank u joe Biden - lets goooooo !!!!! #vote #harris #energize."

Since the announcement, her social media accounts have been full of calls to action.

Lance Bass

Openly gay performer and former member of NSYNC Lance Bass came together with Harris for two iconic moments. The two had a conversation about what was at stake in this election and the importance of voting as a part of the "RuPaul's Drag Race: All Stars" season nine finale.

"Each day we are seeing our rights and freedoms under attack, including the right of everyone to be who they are, love who they love, openly and with pride," Harris said. "So as we fight back against these attacks, let's all remember — no one is alone."


Then later, in one of Harris' first posts on TikTok, Bass asked Kamala what they were going to say to Trump in November.

"Bye, bye, bye," she said, alluding to the NSYNC hit of the same name.

Plus, queer Michigan leaders

And of course, as we've previously covered, queer Michigan elected officials, such as Attorney General Dana Nessel and Secretary of Transportation (and Michigan resident) Pete Buttigieg have made their support known since day one.

Find your sample ballot and information about voting in Michigan at vote411.org.




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Sweet Roles
Puzzle can be found on page 25

What You Need to Know About the 2024 Michigan Supreme Court Race

BROUGHT TO YOU BY ENGAGE MICHIGAN

This November, Michigan voters face a pivotal decision in the upcoming state Supreme Court race. While judicial races often receive less attention than other elections, the significance of this race cannot be overstated, especially for the state's LGBTQ+ community. The decisions made by the Michigan Supreme Court have wide-reaching implications, shaping the legal landscape of the state and influencing policies that impact civil rights, family recognition and equal access to justice.

A history of progress for LGBTQ+ rights

In recent years, the Michigan Supreme Court has delivered rulings that expanded and safeguarded the rights of LGBTQ+ residents. One of the most notable cases, *Rouch World v. Michigan Department of Civil Rights* (2022), established that LGBTQ+ individuals are protected under Michigan's civil rights laws, which prohibit discrimination based on sex. This landmark decision extended protections in employment, housing, education and public accommodations to LGBTQ+ people, ensuring that discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is unlawful. It also propelled the Michigan legislature to codify these protections, making Michigan the 22nd state to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity in its civil rights statutes.

Another important ruling came in *Pueblo v. Haas*, where the Court recognized the rights of non-biological, same-sex parents. Before marriage equality became the law of the land, many same-sex couples were unable to marry and thus, their parental rights were often in

legal limbo. The Court's decision allowed non-biological parents to be recognized legally, giving their children the same protections that children in heterosexual families have. This ruling prompted the state legislature to pass laws ensuring equal parental rights for both LGBTQ+ married and unmarried couples.

In addition to these case rulings, the Michigan Supreme Court implemented a new court rule mandating that judges and court staff address transgender and non-binary individuals by their chosen names and pronouns. Michigan is currently the only state with such a rule, a significant step toward ensuring dignity and respect for all people within the judicial system.

A look at the past: when rights were denied

The recent progress for LGBTQ+ rights in Michigan contrasts sharply with the past. At the start of the 21st century, the Michigan Supreme Court was far less supportive of LGBTQ+ rights. In 2001, the Court allowed local governments to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people in employment. Later, it interpreted Michigan's constitutional marriage amendment to deny same-sex couples not only the right to marry but also the right to enter into civil unions or domestic partnerships. Furthermore, non-biological parents in same-sex relationships were denied parental recognition and same-sex couples were prevented from jointly adopting their children through second-parent adoption.

This history underscores the importance of vigilance in the upcoming election. The Court has evolved over time, but the outcome of the November race will determine whether it continues on this progressive path or reverts to

a more restrictive stance on civil rights.

Why this election matters more than ever

With two seats on the Michigan Supreme Court up for grabs, voters will shape the future of the state's highest legal authority. This Court holds the power to interpret Michigan's laws and the state Constitution, affecting every resident's rights and daily life. It decides whether laws are constitutional, whether voter ballot initiatives can proceed, and makes judgments on a wide array of issues, from civil rights to reproductive freedom to gun safety.

Currently, the Court has a majority that rules in favor of LGBTQ+ rights, with four elected justices nominated by the Democratic Party and three by the Republican Party. However, this balance could shift depending on the outcome of this year's election. Democratic nominee Justice Kyra Harris Bolden, appointed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer, is running against Republican-nominated Patrick William O'Grady to complete the term of former Chief Justice Bridget McCormack. Another seat will open as Justice David Viviano steps down. Democrats nominated Kimberly Ann Thomas and Republicans nominated Andrew Fink to appear on your ballot for a full eight-year term. All four candidates will appear on your ballot and you're able to vote for one in each contest.

The role of state Supreme Courts has become increasingly important in recent years, particularly as the federal judiciary, including the U.S. Supreme Court, has taken a more reactionary turn. State courts are now seen as crucial battlegrounds for civil rights, reproductive rights and voting rights. The Michigan Supreme Court has already played a



key role in protecting these rights. In 2022, for example, the Court allowed a ballot initiative to proceed that let Michiganders vote on enshrining reproductive rights into the state Constitution, a significant move in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to overturn *Roe v. Wade*.

Similarly, state courts have become a line of defense for voting rights and upholding our shared democratic values. In 2020, Michigan's Supreme Court, after reviewing substantial evidence, upheld the results of the presidential election, confirming that President Joe Biden had won the state. This decision was a crucial counterweight to bad actors' efforts to undermine Michigan's election systems. In future elections, the Court may once again be called upon to protect our votes and ensure every vote is counted.

Looking ahead: what's at stake

The Michigan Supreme Court's upcoming docket includes wide-ranging issues that will significantly impact the lives of residents across the state. Lawsuits involving abortion restrictions, minimum wage increases and election laws

are expected to reach the Court in the near future. Decisions on these matters will shape the state's legal framework for years to come, affecting not only the LGBTQ+ community but also workers, voters and individuals seeking reproductive healthcare.

The stakes of this election are high, and it's vital that LGBTQ+ Michiganders take the time to learn about the candidates and their positions. Citizens can help ensure that Michigan remains a place where everyone's rights are protected.

In a time when many are looking to state courts to defend against discrimination and safeguard civil liberties, Michigan voters have the power to shape the future of their state — and the lives of their fellow residents — at the ballot box.

To learn more about the significance of the Michigan Supreme Court and how its decisions affect your daily life, visit MISupremeCourtRocks.com, a resource provided by Engage Michigan..

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The Iraqi-American Twins Shattering Queer Middle Eastern Taboos

Sexy underwear line takes a defiant stance against harmful stigmas



Zak and Michael Zakar. Courtesy photo

BY LIAM CLYMER

Gay identical twins Michael and Zak Zakar, known collectively as “the Zakar Twins” and self-described as the “Middle Eastern Mary-Kate and Ashley Olsen,” aren’t the type to back down from a new project.

As authors, they transformed their own harrowing personal story — facing “coming out to each other and their crazy Iraqi mother who tried to pray their gay away,” the official synopsis goes — into the book-turned-play “Pray the Gay Away” for both local and national audiences. As influencers and podcasters, we’ve seen them live out loud, despite the severe challenges of being an openly LGBTQ+ Iraqi. “Showing you a different side of the Middle East,” their Instagram bio says.

And boy, are they ever. But this time, in briefs and jocks.

That’s right, the brothers’ latest venture has them diving into the world of underwear. The Zakar Twins underwear line, which features the “F*ck Me” jockstrap and “Red Hot Habibi” briefs, takes inspiration from the patterns and colors of Middle Eastern attire.

Zak told BTL the garments are more than simply their latest project — for the twins, they’re a symbol of queer Middle Eastern existence and pride. In part, launching a line was a reaction to what Zak says is how he feels about how Middle Eastern people interact with sex.

“The Middle East isn’t sex-positive,” he said. “The

underwear and our brand hits lots of [sex-positive] notes that just aren’t seen by a Middle Eastern person. So we’re very proud to show that.”

For Michael, incorporating Middle Eastern culture into the style was a crucial part of the design process. He explained that by creating a product that combines “a little sex appeal” with traditional patterns and themes, they hope to spark new conversations about the intersections of Middle Eastern culture and queerness.

“We’re Chaldean — I swear only people in Michigan know what that is: Catholic Iraqi,” Michael said. “Writing, art, anything entertainment-wise — we always try to blend our roots because we just think there’s a lack of Middle Eastern roots in almost everything.”

“The only representation we have is Aladdin, so we’re just trying to showcase a different side of the Middle East with what we do,” Zak added.

Over the last five years, the Zakars have found themselves bouncing from Michigan to L.A., looking for a creative spark. The Troy natives eventually moved to New York in the beginning of 2024 and have found that Manhattan “definitely puts a fire under your ass.” But as they’ve roamed, their cultural roots have rarely strayed too far from their work.

Meanwhile, they’re working on a new book, “I’m Going To Kathy’s” — the twins’ take on the birds and the bees,

See **Zakar Twins**, page 24

favored to win her congressional race in November, which would make her the first transgender U.S. member of Congress, a sign that “we’re on the right track,” Biden said.

A close friend of the Biden family, McBride worked for the president’s eldest son, Beau, who died from cancer in 2015. (As the Blade reported, Biden called to congratulate her on winning the Democratic primary race last week.)

While the president’s close personal and professional relationships with LGBTQ+ friends and aides has often been highlighted in the context of Biden’s leadership on efforts to expand freedoms and protections for the community, he credits first and foremost the values he learned from his father.

“I think my attitude about this, from the very beginning, was shaped by my dad,” Biden said. “You think I’m exaggerating, but my dad was a well-read guy who got admitted to college just before the war started” and in addition to being well educated was “a decent, decent, decent, honorable man.”

“My dad used to say that everyone’s entitled to be treated with dignity,” the president said, recalling a story he has shared before about a time when, as a teenager, he was surprised by the sight of two men kissing in downtown Wilmington, Delaware, and his father responded, “Joey, it’s simple. They love each other.”

“As a consequence of that, most of the things that I’ve done have related to just [what] I think is basic fairness and basic decency,” Biden said.

In his 2017 memoir, “Promise Me, Dad,” Biden writes that the country was too slow to understand “the simple and obvious truth” that LGBTQ+ people are “overwhelmingly good, decent, honorable people who want and deserve the same rights as anyone else.”

Plus, “It’s not like someone wakes up one morning says, ‘you know, I want to be transgender, that’s what I want to do,’” he said. “What do they think people wake up, decide one morning, ‘that’s what I wanted’ — it’s a lot easier being gay, right?”

As vice president, Biden had pushed for the repeal of “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” and for the designation of a national monument to honor Stonewall, but he took a lot of heat — along with a lot of praise from the LGBTQ+ community — for voicing his support for same-sex marriage

before Obama had fully come around to embracing that position.

His remarks came in the heat of the 2012 reelection campaign during an interview with NBC’s “Meet the Press.” Biden told the Blade he had just “visited two guys who had children” and “if you saw these two kids with their fathers, you’d walk away saying, ‘wait a minute, they’re good parents.’”

At the event, a reception hosted by Michael Lombardo, an HBO executive, and Sonny Ward, an architect, Biden pointed to the children and said, “Things are changing so rapidly, it’s going to become a political liability in the near term for someone to say, ‘I oppose gay marriage.’”

Nevertheless, “I remember how everyone was really upset, except the president,” Biden said, when he told David Gregory, “I am absolutely comfortable with the fact that men marrying men and women marrying women and heterosexual men and women marrying men and women are entitled to the same exact rights, all the civil rights, all the civil liberties and, quite frankly, I don’t see much of a distinction beyond that.”

It was a watershed moment. Obama would pledge his support for marriage equality three days later. And 10 years later, as president, Biden would sign the Respect for Marriage Act, a landmark bill codifying legal protections for married same-sex and interracial couples, rights that conservative U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas has expressed an interest in revisiting.

The president glanced at a print-out with bullet points, presumably a list of the various ways in which he and his administration have advanced LGBTQ+ rights over the past four years. “I forgot half the stuff I had done,” he said. “But you know, I’m just really proud of a lot of things we did.”

Ticking through some highlights, Biden started with the Respect for Marriage Act. “I was very proud” to sign the legislation, he said, with a ceremony in December 2022 that included Vice President Kamala Harris, first lady Jill Biden and second gentleman Doug Emhoff.

Biden pointed to several advancements in health equity, such as the FDA’s decision to change “the law so that you could no longer discriminate against using the blood of a gay man or a gay woman,” progress in the national strategy to end HIV by 2030, an initiative coordinated by HHS, and a push to expand access to prophylactic

drug regimens to protect against the transmission of HIV.

He added, “I directed the administration to promote human rights for LGBTQ+ [people] everywhere, particularly, for example, Uganda — they want help from us; they’ve got to change their policy, in terms of the discrimination.”

President Yoweri Museveni in May 2023 signed a law that carries a death penalty provision for “aggravated homosexuality.” The U.S. subsequently imposed visa restrictions on Ugandan officials and removed the country from a program that allows sub-Saharan African countries to trade duty-free with the U.S. The World Bank Group also announced the suspension of new loans to Uganda.

Several of the administration’s pro-LGBTQ+ accomplishments and ongoing work address Republican-led efforts to restrict rights and freedoms. For instance, the president noted the importance of protecting in-vitro fertilization treatments, which are threatened by Trump “and his buddies” who were involved in Project 2025, the 900-plus page governing blueprint that was drafted in anticipation of the former president’s return to the White House. The document contains extreme restrictions on reproductive healthcare and provisions that would strip away LGBTQ-inclusive non-discrimination rules.

“Fighting book bans” is another example, Biden said, adding, “I mean, come on, these guys want to erase history instead of make history.”

Last year, the president appointed an official to serve in the Education Department for purposes of advising schools on instances where their restrictions on reading material, which have been shown to disproportionately target content with LGBTQ+ characters or themes, may run afoul of federal civil rights law.

Before “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” was repealed, Biden said, “I spoke up when they were dismissing people, discharging people in the military because they were gay.” In 2021, just a few days after his inauguration, the president issued an executive order reversing the Trump administration’s ban on military service by transgender service members.

Lowering his voice for emphasis, Biden added, “They can shoot straight. They can shoot just as straight as anybody else.”

Other major pro-LGBTQ+ moves by the Biden-Harris administration include:

- Issuance of a new Title IX policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in public schools, educational activities, and programs
- A proposed rule from HHS that would protect LGBTQ+ youth in foster care
- Expansion of mental health services, including the establishment of a 988 suicide and crisis lifeline, which provides the option for callers to be connected with LGBTQ-trained counselors
- Legal challenges of anti-trans state laws, such as those restricting access to health treatments
- Repeated pushback against these bills by the president and other officials like Jean-Pierre
- The president’s remarks reaffirming his support for the LGBTQ+ community, including in all of his State of the Union addresses
- The administration’s work tackling the mpox outbreak
- Expanded non-discrimination protections in the healthcare space
- Issuance of new guidelines allowing for changes to gender markers on official government-issued IDs
- Efforts to bring justice to veterans who were discharged other than honorably under discriminatory military policies
- The biggest Pride month celebrations ever held at the White House

“But the one thing I didn’t get done was the Equality Act,” Biden said, “which is important.”

The president and his administration pushed hard for Congress to pass the legislation, which would codify LGBTQ-inclusive nondiscrimination protections in areas from housing and employment to lending and jury service.

Biden raised the issue again when the conversation turned to his plans to stay involved after January 2025. “Look,” he said, “when a person can get married” to a spouse of the same sex but might “show up at a restaurant and get thrown out of the restaurant

because they’re LGBTQ, that’s wrong.”

“That’s why we need the Equality Act,” Biden said. “We need to pass it. So, I’m going to be doing everything I can to be part of the outside voices, and I hope my foundations that I will be setting back up will talk about equality across the board.”

“Lawmakers, aides and advocates say that significant obstacles to progress on the Equality Act remain, including polarized views on how to protect the rights of religious institutions that condemn homosexuality and Republicans’ increasing reliance on transgender rights as a wedge issue,” the Washington Post wrote in 2021, after the bill was passed by the House but left to languish in the Senate.

On LGBTQ+ issues more broadly, Biden said, “I think there are a lot of really good Republicans that I’ve served with, especially in the Senate, who don’t have a prejudiced bone in their body about this but are intimidated.”

“Because if you take a position, especially in the MAGA Republican Party now, you’re going to be — they’re going to go after you,” he added. “Trump is a different breed of cat. I mean, I don’t want to make this political, but everything he’s done has been anti, anti-LGBTQ, I mean, across the board.”

Project 2025, the president said, “is just full of nothing but disdain for the LGBTQ+ community. And you have Clarence Thomas talking about, when the decision was made [to overturn] Roe v. Wade, that maybe we should consider changing the right of gays to marry — I mean, things that are just off the wall. Just pure, simple prejudice.”

“What I do worry about is I do worry about violence,” Biden said. “I do worry about intimidation. I do worry about what the MAGA right will continue to try to do, but I’m going to stay involved.”

“I’m going to remain involved in all the civil liberties issues that I have worked for my whole life.”

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Maisy Stella and Aubrey Plaza in “My Old Ass.” Photo: Marni Grossman / Amazon

Back to the Future

Actor Maisy Stella’s Elliott is met with a collision of selves — and identities — in ‘My Old Ass’

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Our older selves might have a lot to say about how we live our lives now. What can we learn from them? And what might they learn from *us*?

Elliott’s dilemma in “My Old Ass,” a film by writer-director Megan Park (“The Fallout”), revolves around the challenge of knowing the unknowable. The story unfolds during a mushroom trip in the woods as Elliott celebrates her 18th birthday with friends, marking the end of an era. As she looks forward to a big-city life in Toronto, far removed from the familiar cranberry farm in rural Ontario she grew up on, she enters a hallucinatory state where an

older, jaded version of herself at 39 (played by Aubrey Plaza) appears to offer a glimpse of what lies ahead — not all of it good.

In her star-making film debut, 20-year-old Stella, who became a child star on the ABC show “Nashville,” captures Elliott’s punkish spirit, portraying a character whose freedom is defined not only by her journey to create her own destiny but also by her exploration of identity. At the start of the film, she has a crush on a girl, a reflection of her previous attractions. But when Chad enters the picture — the very person her older self warns her to avoid — Elliott begins to question her own understanding of love and attraction. Throughout, there’s a

sense that no matter who Elliott becomes as an adult, she will love whomever she chooses.

In a recent video call with Stella, the actor discussed her relationship with labels as a queer person and how she incorporated aspects of her own identity into Elliott.

I’m going to cry just talking about this film, because I cried so much during this movie.

Cry. I’ll cry too just for fun. Let’s do it.

How do you hope that young queer people respond to Elliott and her identity evolution?

Elliott was always very moving to me, the way that she was written. I think that I was lucky enough to grow up in a way where labels weren’t really pushed on me, and I know that’s not everyone’s experience and not everyone is lucky enough to be given the room to explore and be truly open. I feel like the confusion and stress over queerness didn’t come until much later in my life, and so I really related to Elliott in a lot of ways, but I found that part of her to be really safe and comfy, and I wanted it to be done well and done right, and I hope that it was. I hope what people take from it is you’re allowed to change and grow, and queerness is complicated and it’s wide [and] to just exist and

to not put so much pressure on yourself to know exactly what you are when you’re 18. It’s OK if you put a label on [one] day and it ends up changing.

Was Elliott’s queerness all on the page when you got the script, or was there room for shaping that part of her as you went along?

Things changed from the script a little, but she was there. She was definitely written as who she was. I think Megan is super open in terms of writing and changing things. But she’s pretty spot-on with her writing. She’s just a very genuine person, which I think comes across in the way that she writes for people.

In what ways were you able to influence the character? Did you have a say in the styling?

Yeah, with the styling, our costume designer used a lot of my Instagram and what I wear in real life as inspiration for Elliott, which I thought was so cool. I was so confident and comfortable in her clothes, which really played a huge part as to why I was just comfortable in general. It matters a lot more than you think it does, but I think that every person in this movie shaped their character. Megan wants that and is so open to that and actually really encourages it to just have real personality and not just be written. And so yeah, I think I shaped Elliott with personality; so did everyone else in the movie. That's just Megan's style of directing, honestly.

Were there any other themes of self-discovery that felt very familiar to you as somebody who was the age of the character you were playing when you played her?

Yeah. The most relatable aspect of Elliott was how, at the start, she was

just kind of self-centered and self-absorbed and accidentally harmful to her mom and dad and her family, and I really related to that. It's just the feeling when you look at your mom and you just are rushed with sadness and you just feel bad and you're just like, "Wait, oh my god, you're literally just trying your

best. This is your first life. We're all figuring it out, and I am sorry." That's just the feeling, and so I related to Elliott a lot in the ways that I think Elliott gets very caught up in life and excitement and all these things. Leaving home, it's all so exciting to her, and in that, she's accidentally kind of just being

harmful to the people that she loves and that love her. That was probably what I related to the most about Elliott. That felt tender to me. It was such a reminder for me.

Your co-star Aubrey Plaza is considered by many to be a queer icon. On behalf of

all queer women, did you happen to let Aubrey know how much they follow her career and that they wanted Aubrey and Kristen Stewart's character to be together in "Happiest Season" and we're still kind of mad about that?

Yeah, no, I didn't go into detail about that [laughs], but I do agree! I mean, I've always loved Aubrey. I've always been a massive fan. I think she's just such a genius artist and getting to know her as a person and getting to work with her has been one of the greatest things I'll ever get to do. I'll never get over it. I feel genuinely so grateful to have gotten to do that and gotten to be around her. She's just a very special person to get to experience, so yeah.

The ideal older you.

The ideal! If I was asked, I'm not kidding, she would have been my absolute number one pick. I just love her.

The film acknowledges a



Maisy Stella in "My Old Ass." Photo: Marni Grossman / Amazon

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◀ Zakar Twins

Continued from page 20

or as they say, “the bears and the otters.” Currently, the twins are in the process of locking down a publishing company.

The book, which references their close friend Kathy and works in tandem with the themes of sexuality and culture in their underwear line, is about “what past relationships and experiences taught us growing up. We wanted to dive into the world of apparel to match the marketing of the book.”

And then there’s Kathy, who played an integral part in their own self-discovery. Because of her, they had an excuse to sneak out of the house.

“We used the lie to our Mom, ‘I’m going to Kathy’s,’ to explore who we are. So, [using] the facade of our best friend Kathy taught us a lot,” Michael said.

“We always say that we as queer individuals don’t get a queer sex ed, so sketchy hookups become our teacher — and this book is that; it’s our sketchy hookups,” Zak added. “We learned about our bodies through other bodies.”

The book is packed full of the twins’ coming-of-age experiences. They say, in addition to frank stories about sex, it promises to provide the guidance they wish they had.

“I think sex in general can be very awkward,” Michael said. “Especially when no one is telling you how to do it, what you like, what you don’t, what’s your border — there are a lot of comfort levels you have to deal with. I think the book will show that between the beautiful moments and the fun, sexy moments, there’s a lot of awkwardness that you have to figure out. The book showcases a real side of sex.”

Zak said that he wished sex wasn’t taken so seriously. He encouraged readers to go have fun and discover themselves, all the while teasing a juicy tidbit from the book about his encounters with a closeted priest. “I mean, I have stories of me sleeping with a priest — a closeted priest, very fun,” Zak said.

“I wish I was told that sex isn’t that serious,” he added. “I wish people made it sound more fun.”

As the Zakar Twins look ahead, they said they already have new projects in the works. They encouraged readers to look out for a fresh staging of “Pray the Gay Away,” with the possibility of a starring role from a season 12 “RuPaul’s Drag Race” contestant.

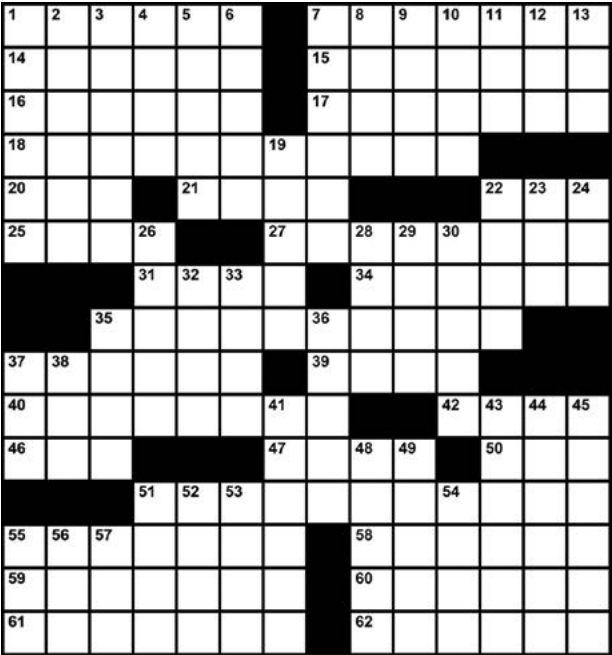
“So, right now we’re talking to Jackie Cox to play the mom character,” Michael said.

“I think Jackie is perfect culturally, but in theory, I want Ginger Minj — I need someone who’s short, stubby and funny,” Zak added.

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Sweet Roles

Across

- 1 Art of Cukor
- 7 2016 romantic drama with Sarah Paulson
- 14 Lion, tiger, or bear
- 15 New edition of "Moby Dick," e.g.
- 16 NG: Violent looting
- 17 NG: Like random shots

- 18 Paulson won a Tony for this Broadway play
- 20 NG: Address book no.
- 21 NG: Greek consonants
- 22 Keanu in "The Matrix"
- 25 From A to B, to Debussy
- 27 Vacation spot in Delaware
- 31 Melissa Etheridge's "Don't Look ____"
- 34 Tickles pink
- 35 Paulson played a Phyllis Schlafly supporter in this FX series

- 37 Like a gown at a drag queen wedding
- 39 NG: Jay of TV
- 40 Margaret Cho, for one
- 42 Queen Cleo's river
- 46 Prez who shared a bed with Joshua Speed
- 47 One that attacks a fly
- 50 NG: Three R's org.
- 51 Paulson played Tammy in this heist movie
- 55 NG: Cameo role
- 58 Hard
- 59 Bening of "Being Julia"
- 60 Rubber
- 61 Paulson played a nurse in this "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" prequel
- 62 NG: "Who goes there?" shouter

Down

- 1 Weight units for a girl's best friend
- 2 NG: All worked up
- 3 A conservative halter covers it
- 4 Arab head
- 5 Bruce Wayne's stately estate
- 6 Alpha, to the circumcised
- 7 S&M reminder
- 8 NG: Musical Horne
- 9 ____ the crack of dawn
- 10 Lake of Ohio ferries
- 11 NG: Morrison of the Doors
- 12 One, for James M. Barrie
- 13 NG: From Jan. 1 to now
- 19 "Air Music" composer Ned

- 22 Ani DiFranco's "____ Pretty Girl"
- 23 Summer for Rimbaud
- 24 Satisfied cries, perhaps
- 26 NG: Game show Don
- 28 NG: On the spot
- 29 "Brothers & Sisters" producer Ken
- 30 Painter Francis
- 32 Old head
- 33 NG: Neighbor of Senegal
- 35 Communicate with the body
- 36 Eulogizer of Diana in song
- 37 NG: Food preservative
- 38 Obstacle, to Shakespeare
- 41 NG: Declared as fact
- 43 Take into the body
- 44 NG: Newsman Jim
- 45 Hamburger Mary's, e.g.
- 48 Targets of tops
- 49 Brand of machine that cuts leaves of grass
- 51 NG: Crude cartel
- 52 NG: Not Prot.
- 53 "Ziegfeld Follies" costume designer
- 54 Sergei of "The Opposite of Sex"
- 55 Where to gaze at a hottie
- 56 NG: Concert suffix
- 57 Stuff for a blow job?

See p. 17 for answers





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◀ My Old Ass

Continued from page 23

topic that film doesn't often explore and one that, in fact, is rarely discussed openly: how queerness is still valid even when someone is dating a person of the opposite sex. Can you talk about the significance of that aspect of the movie in relation to Elliott and the way that she comes out as gay to Chad?

I mean, that's a real thing that a lot of people — a lot of women, a lot of bisexual women — struggle with. It's a real thing where they fall in love with a man, and they're bisexual. It means they like men and women and then [it's] like, "Oh, you're not bisexual anymore." It doesn't really make sense to me. I think that bisexual women, if they're in a relationship with a man, it doesn't make them any less queer if they are still attracted to women. It's a weird thing. I know a lot of people that experience that and struggle with that, and so I think it's a cool thing to acknowledge. I am always searching for queer movies and a lot of times it's just a little bit too much. It's just like the

only focus of the character is that they're queer, and so I really love that Elliott has so much more to her and that that's just part of her; it feels really special to me. It feels so human and real and not overdone.

Given that "My Old Ass" will shape a lot of young queer people, I'm

“I hope what people take from it is you're allowed to change and grow, and queerness is complicated.”

wondering what queer movies were there for you growing up.

"Blue Is the Warmest Color" was the first movie that I'd watched that knocked me off my chair. I was like, "All right, things are turning." "Portrait of a Lady on Fire" is also so beautiful. I would say those are probably the two that live the highest in my head.



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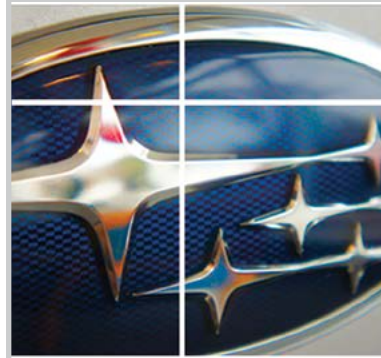
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